

England - Parliament - Petitions Addressed, &c. 1793
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R E A S O N S

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TO THE CONSIDERATION OF PARLIAMENT,

WHY THEY SHOULD NOT GRANT

THEIR IMMEDIATE CONSENT

TO THE PETITION OF

THE COMMITTEE OF THE UNION CANAL

FROM

LEICESTER BY HARBOROUGH TO NORTHAMPTON.

It is the common fate in all disputed points, that each attaches himself to one side, without allowing the other any Share of Truth.

It is reserved for the *unbiased* and *sound* Judgment, which can take from every Opinion, whatever Truth it contains, and from the whole united together to raise one regular, beneficial and lasting System.

DR. HOME.

1793.

R E A S O N S

TO THE COMMISSION OF PARLIAMENT.

THEIR IMMEDIATE COMPLAINT

THE COMMISSION OF PARLIAMENT



IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE COMMISSION OF PARLIAMENT

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R E A S O N S, &c.

THE Committee of the Northampton and Harborough Union Canal do allow, that the primary Use of such Canal must arise from Opening a Market with the Metropolis from Hull, eastward, and Liverpool westward, — and the intermediate places of Trade.

Now whenever the Grand Junction is compleated at Braunston, such Opening will take place immediately—as there already exists a Canal from Braunston to Fafely, Bromley Common,—then to Burton-upon-Trent and Shardlow—whence navigable to Hull. From Bromley, there is a Canal to the Mersey and another to the Severn.

This Fact furnishes the strongest Reasons for Consideration and against the immediate Consent of Parliament to the Petition of the Committee of the *Union Canal*. For this Canal when executed will be a parallel to the one alluded to above, and to which the Faith of Parliament is already pledged.

The Expenses are large and certain—calculated at no less than five thousand pounds per Mile—and Many are inclined to think the prospect of Success to the Subscribers promises from this single Consideration, but a low rate of Interest for their Money. *

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*It may here be remarked, that the Canal, called the Grand Trunk, as far Northward as from Runcorn to Harecastle, was executed at the Rate of 700l. per Mile, all expenses included, as to Bridges, Locks, &c. except that of the expense of the Bill thro' Parliament—and from the Tunnel thro' Harecastle to Wilden-ferry at the Rate of 1000l. per Mile—This Grand Trunk being 90 Miles in Length, besides a large number of Bridges, has Seventy-five Locks—Passage thro' Harecastle, 2880 Yards in length and Seventy Yards below the Surface, cost 10,000l.

The Town of Northampton are in no want of such Canal—For whenever the Grand Junction is completed at Braunston, the Committee of that Canal will make to the Inhabitants of Northampton a Cut from the said Canal at or near Gayton to some point near that Town.—By these means, they will have a Water Carriage from LONDON, Birmingham, Stourport, Liverpool, Hull and Oxford. The Coals of Staffordshire and Warwickshire will be brought to Them at lower prices than the Derbyshire possibly can by their proposed Line. And if a Canal from Ashby-Wolds to Griff should take place, which is now in Contemplation, They will likewise be furnished with the valuable Coals of Oakthorpe or Measham.

The proposed Line is thro' a remarkably rich Country—a considerable Quantity of which is worth from 30 to 40 Shillings per Acre. Nor is there either within the Bowels of the Earth in this Tract, or on its Surface, Valuables sufficient to keep the Boats always laden. A Matter surely highly necessary to satisfy the Expectations of the Subscribers. Northampton has been said to be a Granary of Corn, capable of supplying distant Counties. Whatever it might have been formerly this Argument loses much of its force by the Number of open fields, which have been within the last thirty Years enclosed—whence many Acres once devoted to Tillage have been converted into Pasture. And indeed much of this sending Corn to distant parts depends on the contingency of the Harvest and Seasons—as may be proved from the small number of Waggon loads with Grain, which passed thro' the Turnpikes on the Harborough and Welford Roads, in the year 1791, — owing to the productive Season of Corn thro' the Kingdom.

Much injury must inevitably accrue to private property by this plan—and where Success is so doubtful, Delay is justifiable. But when the Expenses are brought forward and are acknowledged to be upwards

upwards of 220,000*l.* (in which Account the future fortune of the Adventurers is mainly at stake)—and of this Sum 30,000*l.* or upwards is to be devoted to the accommodating the Town of Harborough—cutting thro' a remarkably rich Valley, of eight Miles of Canal, to advance the Scheme only $1\frac{1}{4}$ Mile—And 5,000*l.* to accommodate the Town of Northampton and its Vicinities, which as observed before does not want such Canal—surely every conscientious person in the Committee, who wishes to discharge the Trust reposed in Him, by an upright Adherence to the *Good* of the Community, the *Interest* of Land-owners, and Occupiers, and the *Welfare* of the Subscribers—must allow that a Petition of this Importance ought not to be hurry'd—but on the contrary more Time for weighing its Merits should be allowed; for it may with propriety be asked, What is the Interval from June 19th to September 7th, when the Matter first came forward to the Decision of the Committee?—I say *They* should surely be thus actuated, lest their Advice resemble the Reed of Egypt, which was not only incapable of sustaining the incumbent pressure, but which pierced the Hand that leaned upon it.

Mr. Jessop has stated, that the expenses of a Line of Canal from the Grand Junction to, or near Northampton being $4\frac{1}{2}$ Miles, will cost 18,785*l.*—and that without the intended Union Canal's Assistance, such Cut may not answer the expense.

To this it may be answered, That without pretending to say what ought to be the Sum arising from Tonnage along this Cut—If the Grand Junction is to be so great a Good to the Public, as its Advocates are willing to suppose, it does not seem reasonable, that other Districts should be liable to Injury, to secure Them from all hazard, in every Cut, that is branched out—It is from the result of the whole Tonnage from Brentford to Braunston comprehending that on the several branches

branches from the Canal, that the Adventurers are to derive their Reward. —Now it is “supposed that 100,000 Tons of general Merchandize will annually pass on the Grand Junction Canal”—that Northampton will have a *proper* Share of this Quantity of Goods consigned to it, no one will doubt. They will have an open Market to London, Birmingham, Oxford, Liverpool, and Hull, with other intermediate places—They will have the opportunity of sending their Sea Coals, Deals and Wines into Bucks, Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire—Their superfluous Corn, particularly Oats to Dunstable, Stratford, &c.—Their Wheat and Barley, to Coventry, which in general is a larger Market than Leicester. And to these may be added, as Articles which must come from the Grand Junction at Gayton to Northampton, the Warwickshire and Staffordshire Pit Coals, which the Town and Vicinities will consume. From this Consideration there can be little doubt, but a proper Interest will be raised for the expenses of this Cut, without being obliged to look forward to advantages from an extended Line from Harborough to Northampton.

The Author of the Advantages of Inland Navigation thus writes “It wou’d be proper if the Government were to stay the Petitions of private people, and take a Summer or more to consider and find out which is the most proper part of the Country to carry these Communications through, not regarding in the least any populous trading town—but they shou’d find out that Course which wou’d afford at the Summit the most ample Supply of Water in a dry Summer, and this is the chief article upon which the Good or Evil of such Navigation depends, for as there must naturally be a high Summit of Land between each Junction, from whence the Water runs both Ways—which unless there is an ample Supply of Water for the filling the two upper Locks, a number of Times each day, in order to admit the passage of

as many Boats, it is in vain to propose a Navigation—for every Time a Boat passes, there will be required a Supply of five hundred and seventy-six cubic Yards of Water.—It shou'd therefore on this Account be wished, that this material point were well weighed, for if the Water in these main Trunks shou'd fail there is an End of the Navigation. The proper Course of such Supply ought first to be found out, not regarding any particular populous Town or Manufacture whatsoever, as it wou'd be most proper to have Canals cut into the main Trunk from each place or Town.”

Now to accommodate the Town of Northampton and it's vicinities, the proposed Line will pass thro' a Country, which in a dry Summer, is often distressed for Water—the brooks and ponds not affording sufficient for the Cattle.—And though a Reservoir, to the size of Eighty Acres, or upwards, has been thought necessary and determined upon, yet much doubt is with propriety entertained whether, after the Canal shall have drained it wholly or in part, this can be replenished in the hot dry Months, from the low State of the adjacent Springs and Brooks—And as the Soil is in general strong Clay—exhalations of a pernicious tendency will arise by the Action of the Sun in a dry Summer from the Ooze and corrupting Vegetables, which in the Judgment of a Celebrated *professional Character* may affect the Health of those Inhabitants who shall be within their Reach, particularly when a South-West Wind blows.

It is likewise submitted to the Wisdom of the Legislature, to adopt some Method to assist those Turnpike and Cross Roads or Highways, which are adjoining to a Canal. For the provision already granted by Parliament, will in those cases, be ineffectual, where a Navigation is supposed to be an essential benefit to a Country. In most of the deep rich Soils Materials are in general scarcely to be found, and every Parish, or Lordship, from the first that adjoins the Cut, to the many in Succession must be put to extraordinary expenses, or be liable to an Indictment.

This fact is notorious from the Quantity of Coals drawn from Hill-morton Wharf, thro' the parishes of West-Haddon, Guilsborough, Cold-Ashby, Thornby and Naseby, not to mention many others. And there can be little doubt, but the same effect, will follow, if the Derbyshire Coals are sought after in any Quantities, so as to pay Interest to the Subscribers to this intended Union Canal. For is is well known, that the Country, through which it is proposed is deep, and materials are with difficulty obtained from Harborough to Lamport for the Turnpike Road. The highways in general being very bad. And tho' nine Thousand Tons have been said to pass along that Road, yet it is clear that 60,000 Tons must pass over every and each Mile to pay 5l. per Cent, and consequently 90,000 Tons, to enable the proprietors to divide $7\frac{1}{2}$ l. per Cent. It is hoped therefore that Parliament will take this important Matter into their serious Consideration and not grant the Petition without some Provision for the grievances alluded to.

It has been stated by the Advocates for this Petition, that nine Thousand Tons of Goods pass annually, between Harborough and Northampton, and that this Quantity will be consigned to a Water Carriage, the Income of that Road will be diminished, three hundred pounds *per Annum*, allowing three Tons to a Waggon Load, for there are Two Toll-gates, at each of which one Shilling is paid by a broad wheeled Waggon. And should the effects of the Canal in other Articles bear a proportion in the further diminution of the Tolls—doth it not follow, that Parliament will wish for Time, fully to discuss these Matters, that the Security of those Subscribers to the forming and keeping in Repair, the Road above-mentioned, be not lessened and weakened. For under these Circumstances, it may fairly be presumed, that no indulgence can be granted by the Commissioners of the Roads to the Farmers, by abating of their Statute Duty, and yet the Highways will want more repair than before.

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It is not hereby meant to insinuate that this Objection is peculiar to this intended Union Canal, but applies to all Canals in similar Circumstances, and calls for Deliberation, in proportion to the Magnitude and Length of the Canal.*

As to what more particularly concerns the Town of Harborough—it should be observed, that the Line recommended and surveyed by Mr. RINGROSE ought to have been surveyed by Mr. JESSOP, because to condemn it without such survey is prejudging. What speaks in its favor is that eight Miles of Cutting are saved—It gives Water to the Grand Junction—has ten Miles of Level thro' a Country not so valuable, nor so circuitous—rises 113 Feet less, and saves thereby nineteen Locks—is more advantageous to the Town of Harborough, communicating in a readier Manner with Birmingham and the Severn and Mersey Navigations—bringing the Staffordshire and Warwickshire Coals, by a nearer Line—and if as observed before of Northampton, the intended Canal from Ashby-Wolds to Griff succeeds—the valuable Coals of Oakthorpe, it is said will be afforded at Harborough for 12½d per Cwt.—These advantages vastly outweigh any Inconvenience by having a few more Miles water Carriage from London—viz. from Gayton to Braunston—should that be the Case upon a Measurement—This Line is most friendly to the Oxford Canal—as appears by the Map—for all the Goods consigned to that Town must come down the Oxford and Coventry Canals to Welton.

But it may be asked whether the Majority of the Inhabitants of Leicester, Harborough, and Northampton, are not inclined to think that the Advantages to Them, are certain and important — To this Question

*Mr. Philips in his History of Inland Navigations, after reciting certain Clauses in the Acts granted to the Duke of Bridgewater, thus remarks, "By the above abstracts it will appear how cautiously the Legislature guarded against the infringements of public or private Rights, or trespassing upon private Property." (Page 84.)

Question it may be answered, that Report has spoken negatively as to the Hopes and Expectations of the two former. And tho' indeed no less than 170,000l. was offered at one of the Meetings, yet nothing can be concluded from this high figure involving so many Shares, against the Sense of the Community more immediately concerned, — for it is well known — that Numbers of the Subscribers came from distant parts — and that much improper Speculation has been encouraged, so that it is impossible to distinguish between the upright Adherent to the Bill and the specious Advocate — And surely this want of Caution in the Committee is a heavy Censure of their Measures, which other Committees are peculiarly on their Guard not to merit — as may be seen by adverting to the Crinan Navigation Bill and those from Bristol to Taunton and Worcester.

Here might properly be discussed Questions of the present prices of Coals at those places where inland Navigations have been completed, compared with their prices before such Canals were made. — Much having been advanced as to the reduced Prices where such Canals have been executed — Whence a remark arises worthy of Attention, which is the Certainty of Coals being sold at a *permanent reduced* Price where the Owner of the Colliery is the Proprietor of the Canal, as may be seen by referring to the Duke of Bridgewater's, Sir Nigel Grasley's, and others — How much therefore is it to be wished that all Committees prior to their application to Parliament, wou'd endeavour to obtain from the Owners of Coalpits, certain terms, whereby the public shall be served for a number of years at a price fixed — and not lay themselves open to the arbitrary Value which may be set upon the Coals, when the Canal is executed to the Pit-Mouth — And to this Particular, the Committee of the Union Canal have not attended — which had they taken more Time, they undoubtedly might.

In general Coal seems to be the principal Article for Boats on Canals.

And

And hence a pleasing because a humane Idea arises,—the furnishing of the poor with Fuel. But unfortunately for the lower Class, it is well known, that when Coals are above 12d per Cwt. very few of the Day-Labourers can afford to allow themselves one Cwt. per Week, and unless the Parish Officers come forward and assist the Poor, by retailing them at a price under the original Cost this valuable part of the Argument will not hold good. And how far this Scheme can be adopted by the Community at large is a serious Question that calls for mature Deliberation.

The Result of these Observations sufficiently proves the Impropriety of so early a petition to Parliament — because at all Events some Years must elapse before the Grand Junction can be completed, and in the mean time the great Questions of the Utility and Policy of this Union Canal may be more fully discussed, to the sure Advantage of the true Subscriber.



